

GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED BUDGET FY18 – FY19
Appropriations Hearing
Department of Housing
Friday, February 17, 2017

Senator Olsten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron, and Members of the Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today of the important investments through the Department of Housing to support efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut.

My name is Catherine Kriss and I am a registered voter in Enfield (58th District).

We recognize that Connecticut is in a place where tough choices have to be made to our state budget. On some of these talking points, I beg to differ.

I duly recognize that every year we *allegedly* see declining numbers of people experiencing homelessness. The 2016 Point-In-Time (PIT) Count showed the lowest number of people experiencing homelessness in Connecticut. However, in the Town of Enfield where I reside, there are more homeless that are not counted in that PIT Count. Perhaps the homeless do not want to be counted because they are afraid of contact from outsiders, but allegedly through different sources, there are over 40 homeless living in different, out-of-the-way places in my Town, behind shopping malls, down by the Connecticut River, in the woods, etc. In fact, a family I have known for approximately one year's time is about to become homeless, as they cannot secure housing in Enfield or any surrounding town, for their income level. *They will be receiving temporary supports and then what?* **THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES!**

Please do not cut funding to programs in place that are attempting to remedy this tragic situation. To shine a little light for you on this problem, in Enfield we have started a grassroots organization, the Enfield Safe Harbor Warming Center, to help the homeless from mid-January to mid-March, Monday – Sunday, 9:00 p.m.-7:00 a.m. It is in its second year of existence, thanks to some very dedicated churches, Enfield Social Services Dept., Community Health Resources (CHR), and many donations of time and money from kind-hearted, understanding people. Last season, we served a total of 486 guests.

Cuts to these frontline services, outreach, emergency shelters and the RAP and other supports in place would risk reversing whatever progress we have made to end chronic

homelessness. These cuts could mean increases in unsheltered, high-need homelessness, taking us in the wrong direction and imposing new costs on our communities.

Thank you for hearing my testimony and thank you for your support for efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut.

Yours,

Catherine F. Kriss
North Central Regional Mental Health
Board Member
CHR Client
Enfield Safe Harbor Warming Center Board Secretary